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TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE IN THE FIELD OF STATISTICAL TRAINING IN AFRICA UNDER THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM (1983-1985)

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Over the past three decades, most of the developed countries and a few developing countries have established well developed statistical organizations. They continuously provide quality data to assist government and private sector in formulating sound policies and to advance public knowledge of current issues. On the other hand, a large number of countries that are as yet statistically less developed are still facing problems in the development of their statistical systems, and are therefore unable to generate reliable data base essential for the formulation of development programmes as well as for sustaining the programmes once they are developed. The United Nations system recognized at a very early stage of its technical co-operation activities that the establishment of facilities for effective training in the field of statistics was a key factor for generating the development of the statistical organization. The concerted effort of the United Nations and its specialized agencies as well as the regional commissions in emphasizing the need and priority is quite evident in the technical co-operation work undertaken by the United Nations system.

2. The Statistical Commission at its twenty-third session emphasized the importance of the training component in the technical co-operation in statistics. It urged that every effort should be made to ensure that the highest attention be given to training component in allocating resources to technical co-operation programmes. The Commission also stressed the importance of training of trainers.

3. The following sections of the present document give a brief description of the technical and financial assistance in the field of statistical training provided to the countries of African region during 1983-1985 under the United Nations system. The materials assembled here are largely based on submission by the United Nations, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Health Organization (WHO), for the twenty-third session of the Statistical Commission.

II. MAIN ASPECTS OF ASSISTANCE IN TRAINING

4. Training comprises fellowships in training institutions, observations at national statistical offices, regional or headquarters offices of international or bilateral organizations and attendance at workshops, working groups and seminars located in or outside the home country. This report will refer only to those cases that are part of the technical co-operation projects funded and/or executed by organizations under the United Nations system.

5. During the period 1983-85, 31 countries in Africa benefitted from the training components included in the projects executed by the United Nations. These projects were in the fields of population censuses, demographic surveys, civil registration, general statistics including statistical organization, national accounts and economic statistics, computer affairs and data processing etc. In 1983, out of a total of $4,913,000 an amount of $440,000 or 9.0% was spent on training. In 1984 out of a total budget of $4,847,000 an amount of $644,000 that is, 13.3% was spent on this component. As of April 1985, the total amount budgeted for the technical co-operation projects was $6,100,000 of which $1,180,000 or 19.3% had been kept for training. The amounts spent by Economic Commission for Africa on training component during the years 1983 and 1984 were $359,000 and $270,200 which were 27.6 and 16.7 per cent of total costs respectively.

6. The global expenditures on training made by the ILO were $54,000 in 1983 and $19,000 in 1984, by FAO $465,000 in 1983 and $541,000 in 1984, by UNESCO $96,000 in 1983 and $142,000 in 1984, by WHO $430,000 in 1983 and $447,000 in 1984. The World Bank and IMF provided training locally to counterpart staff through ad hoc missions to countries. Regional breakdowns of these figures and the data for 1985 could not be obtained at the time of the preparation of this document.

III. TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (TCDC)

7. A project for on-the-job training of junior professionals in statistics and data processing of developing countries was initiated by the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development of the United Nations as an activity to promote technical co-operation among developing countries. Under this project, selected developing countries that are statistically less developed in general are requested to nominate candidates for training in other developing countries that are considered to have the capability of offering on-the-job training in specific fields. In 1983, 16 fellows from African countries received on-the-job training in 5 African countries and 1 Caribbean country. In 1983 the cost of training was $59,100. In 1984, 4 fellows from one African country were received by a country in Latin America. The total cost in 1984 for training was $37,076. In 1985, arrangements are being made to send candidates to suitable countries. In addition to the above, arrangements are being made to hold a workshop on national accounts in Mexico City (Mexico) where some countries from the region will participate.

IV. OTHER PROGRAMMES

8. Under Regular Budget Programme of the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development and in collaboration with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics that provide the technical assistance, training courses in agricultural and economic statistics, and statistical data collection and data processing were conducted in the Soviet Union during 1983-85 for statisticians from developing countries. In 1983, 25 fellows from Africa participated in the training. The number of fellows was 15 in 1984 and 15 up to mid-1985.